

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

S E C R E T STATE 304901

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJECT: U.S. NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE TO THAILAND

REF: STATE 237996

SUMMARY: DURING THE DEPARTMENT'S ON-GOING REVIEW OF CCINC FUNDED NARCOTICS CONTROL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN THAILAND (REFTEL), WE HAVE FOUND REASON FOR CONCERN. THE RTG'S NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO SUPPRESS ILLICIT NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING IS WEAK. THE EMBASSY SHOULD POINT OUT TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE RTG THAT CONTINUATION OF THIS SITUATION COULD TRIGGER SECTION 481 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT.

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AS A RESULT OF OUR REVIEW, WE ARE REVISING OUR APPROACH TO U.S.-RTG COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS MATTERS. THIS WILL INVOLVE CANCELLING FURTHER HELICOPTER DELIVERIES TO THE TNPD AND SUSPENDING ACTION ON CCINC-FUNDED CROP SUBSTI-

TUTION AND DEVELOPMENT TYPE PROGRAMS. WE PLAN, HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF OUR NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO THAI ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND HOPE THIS WILL ASSURE CONTINUING RTG COOPERATION AT LEAST WITH DEA. OUR ACTIVE SUPPORT OF UNFDAC'S PROGRAMS WILL ALSO CONTINUE. THE EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ARE SOLICITED. END SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE SHOULD CALL UPON PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AT AN EARLY DATE TO DISCUSS WHAT WE PERCEIVE TO BE THE NEED FOR A STRONG NATIONAL THAI COMMITMENT AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD USE THE SECRETARY'S RECENT ASSURANCES TO FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI THAT THE USG VALUES AND WISHES TO MAINTAIN ITS FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION WITH THAILAND. WE ARE THUS CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS WHICH A WEAK RTG ANTI-NARCOTICS COMMITMENT MIGHT HAVE UPON U.S.-THAI RELATIONS.

2. SPECIFICALLY, THERE IS GROWING CONCERN IN THE DEPARTMENT THAT THE ADMINISTRATION MAY COME UNDER PRESSURE TO INVOKE CERTAIN SECTIONS OF U.S. LEGISLATION AGAINST THAILAND BECAUSE OF WHAT COULD COME TO BE PERCEIVED AS INADEQUATE THAI MEASURES IN SUPPRESSING ILLICIT NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD BE MADE AWARE, NOT AS A THREAT BUT AS A STATEMENT OF A PROBLEM, THAT SECTION 481 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT REQUIRES THE SUSPENSION OF ALL ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE (INCLUDING FMS AND MAP) IF THE PRESIDENT, EITHER AS A RESULT OF EXECUTIVE OR CONGRESSIONAL BRANCH INITIATIVE, DETERMINES THAT A COUNTRY IS NOT TAKING ADEQUATE STEPS IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION (FOR EXACT WORDING SEE SECTION 481 OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT). MOREOVER, THE 1974 TRADE ACT USES SIMILAR LANGUAGE TO MAKE NON-COOPERATING COUNTRIES INELIGIBLE FOR PREFERENTIAL TARIFF TREATMENT (INCLUDING MFN AND GSP). OTHER LEGISLATION REQUIRES THE U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF THE IBRD, IDA AND THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (AMONG OTHERS) TO VOTE AGAINST THE UTILIZATION OF FUNDS OF
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ANY OF THESE INSTITUTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY THE PRESIDENT AS HAVING FAILED TO TAKE ADEQUATE STEPS IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION.

3. THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS WE BELIEVE SHOULD BE ACTED UPON IN DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE THAI NATIONAL COMMITMENT AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. THE MOST SERIOUS OF THESE IS THE PREVALENCE OF NARCOTICS-RELATED CORRUPTION AMONG MANY SENIOR THAI CIVILIAN, POLICE, AND MILITARY OFFICIALS. SUCH CORRUPTION OFTEN NEUTRALIZES EFFORTS OF HONEST OFFICIALS, CREATING A SITUATION WHERE NOTORIOUS CRIMINALS OPERATE WITH IMPUNITY.

IN ADDITION, EVEN IF MAJOR TRAFFICKERS ARE ARRESTED, THEY HAVE NO FEAR OF EFFECTIVE PROSECUTION (E.G., SUKREE AND MA). EFFORTS BY HONEST OFFICIALS ARE EVEN FURTHER DISCOURAGED WHEN SEIZED NARCOTICS MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEAR FROM RTG CUSTODY AND BECOME "RECYCLED" IN

THE ILLICIT MARKET.

4. ANOTHER PROBLEM AREA IS CONTINUING RTG SUPPORT FOR ARMED NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS WHO OPERATE IN BURMA WITH THE HELP OF THAI BASES AND BRING TONS OF NARCOTICS INTO THAILAND FOR FURTHER DISTRIBUTION INTO THE DOMESTIC AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL MARKET. IT IS DISCOURAGING FOR THE US TO CONTINUE PROVIDING EQUIPMENT TO THE TNPD TO SUPPRESS TRAFFICKERS WHO ARE IN TURN RECEIVING RTG SUPPORT AS A MATTER OF POLICY. IT IS EVEN MORE DISAPPOINTING WHEN THE EQUIPMENT WE PROVIDE TO THE RTG HAS BEEN USED IN ILLICIT TRAFFICKING.

5. THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD ALSO ASK WHEN THE RTG PLANS TO TAKE AT LEAST INITIAL STEPS TO ENFORCE ITS 1959 BAN ON OPIUM CULTIVATION. THE UN FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL HAS DEVELOPED A PROGRAM IN NORTHERN THAILAND WHICH COULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN A NUMBER OF VILLAGES, COUPLED WITH AN ADEQUATE ENFORCEMENT TO ASSURE THE FARMERS DO NOT CONTINUE TO PRODUCE ILLICIT OPIUM.

6. WE FIND RTG INACTION ON THESE MATTERS TO BE PARTI-
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CULARLY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THAILAND'S OWN GROWING ADDICTION PROBLEM. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE SHOULD ASK THAT THE PRIME MINISTER TAKE ACTION ON THE NARCOTICS ISSUE TO DEVELOP THE NECESSARY NATIONAL COMMITMENT REQUIRED. HE SHOULD NOTE THAT THE PRESENT BUDGET OF \$225,000 FOR THE NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION ORGANIZATION HAS NOT BEEN INCREASED SINCE 1964 AND DEA MUST CONTINUE TO FUND SNO AND MNU, WHILE THE BUDGET FOR THE TNPD HAS NEARLY DOUBLED SINCE 1969.

7. AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S TALK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, APPROPRIATE TNPD OFFICIALS SHOULD BE SEPARATELY INFORMED OF OUR VIEWS ON THE THAI ANTI-NARCOTICS COMMITMENT. THEY SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES DESCRIBED IN PARA 2. AT THE SAME TIME, THE POLICE SHOULD BE PRESENTED BY A LETTER FROM USOM GIVING THE TNPD 30 DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE OF INTENTION TO TERMINATE THE PROAG 238-4024 DATED MAY 20, 1974 COVERING THE FIVE ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS. THIS DECISION WAS REACHED PARTLY BECAUSE OF THEIR POSSIBLE MISUSE, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE UNDER-USE OF THE TWO ALREADY DELIVERED.

8. THE ORIGINAL JUSTIFICATION FOR SEVEN HELICOPTERS WAS THE NEED FOR PLATOON INTEGRITY IN OPERATIONS AGAINST LARGE OPIUM CARAVANS ENTERING THAILAND. THE CURRENT TRAFFICKING PRACTICES NOW APPEAR TO BE (1) TO BREAK UP

LARGE CARAVANS ON THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER AND ENTER THAILAND IN SMALL UNITS, AND (2) TO REFINES THE RAW OPIUM ON THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER, THUS REDUCING BULK AND THE NEED FOR CARAVANS TO ENTER THAILAND. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE TNP, IN RECOGNITION OF THIS TREND, PLANNED TO DIVIDE THE NEXT FIVE HELICOPTERS BETWEEN CHIANG MAI AND SONGKLA, AND THEREBY CONFIRMING THE PHASE-OUT OF THE PLATOON INTEGRITY CONCEPT. ADDITIONALLY, THE TWO CCINC-FUNDED HELICOPTERS ALREADY DELIVERED ARE GENERALLY UNDER-USED, WITH FEW NARCOTICS-RELATED MISSIONS BEING FLOWN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE TNP SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT DESPITE THE LACK OF LARGE CARAVANS, THE PROAG DOES CALL FOR THE USE OF THE HELICOPTERS IN A VARIETY OF OTHER NARCOTIC SECRET

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SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES. SHOULD THE TNP, WITHIN THE 30 DAYS' NOTIFICATION PERIOD, DEVELOP AN AGGRESSIVE ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONAL PLAN REQUIRING THE USE OF HELICOPTERS, AND IMPLEMENT THE PLAN WITH THE TWO AIRCRAFT PREVIOUSLY DELIVERED, THE USG WOULD BE WILLING TO RECONSIDER THE TERMINATION NOTICE. THE TNP SHOULD UNDERSTAND CLEARLY THAT VERBAL ASSURANCE WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO REVERSE THIS DECISION.

9. FYI: OUR REVIEW HAS ALSO CONCLUDED THAT CCINC-FUNDED CROP SUBSTITUTION AND DEVELOPMENT TYPE PROGRAMS IN THAILAND MAY PROVE OF ONLY LIMITED VALUE IN SUPPRESSING INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. LATEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE INDICATES THAT THAILAND'S RELATIVELY SMALL YEARLY OPIUM PRODUCTION INCREASINGLY GOES LARGELY TO SUPPORT THAT COUNTRY'S OWN GROWING ADDICT POPULATION. AND, WHILE WE SEE CROP SUBSTITUTION AS AN IMPORTANT GOAL, WE DOUBT THAT THE RTG HAS THE POLITICAL WILL NECESSARY TO ENFORCE A LARGE SCALE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM. CONSEQUENTLY, ACTION ON PRESENT CCINC-FUNDED CROP SUBSTITUTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SHOULD BE DEFERRED PENDING RTG REACTION TO THESE DEMARCHES. END FYI.

10. IN PERSPECTIVE OUR ACTIONS APPEAR MUCH LESS HARSH THAN AT FIRST GLANCE. THE THAIS THEMSELVES HAVE SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN CCINC CROP SUBSTITUTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF UNFAC WORK IN THIS AREA SHOULD SHOW THAT WE HAVE NOT LOST INTEREST IN THAILAND'S NEED FOR CROP SUBSTITUTION. OUR CONTINUED AND SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FOR THAI CUSTOMS IMPROVEMENT

SHOULD ALSO DEMONSTRATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THE RTG ON NARCOTICS MATTERS.

11. WE EXPECT THAT THE TNPd WILL BE UPSET BY OUR ACTIONS ON THE HELICOPTERS, BUT FOR REASONS OF PRIDE MORE THAN ANY REAL HARM DONE TO THEIR NEEDED ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITIES. WE HAVE CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE POLICE MAY ATTEMPT TO CURTAIL DEA ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND AS RETALIATION FOR OUR WITHHOLDING THE HELICOPTERS. TO PRECLUDE SUCH ACTION, THEY SHOULD BE REMINDED OF THE SECRET

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REASONS BEHIND OUR DECISION, AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO PROVIDE EXTENSIVE TRAINING ASSISTANCE TO THE TNPd. ADDITIONALLY, DEA IS STILL FUNDING SNO AND MNU PENDING RTG ASSUMPTION OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY. AND FINALLY, AT A HIGHER LEVEL, THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S SENSE OF NATIONAL SELF-INTEREST SHOULD KEEP TNPd REACTION UNDER CONTROL.

12. WE COUNT ON THE EMBASSY TO EXPLAIN THESE JUDGEMENTS AND SHIFTS IN OUR PROGRAM TO THE RTG IN WAYS WHICH WILL MINIMIZE ANY ADVERSE IMPACT ON U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. WE WOULD ALSO WELCOME ANY EMBASSY COMMENT AND SUGGESTIONS EITHER AS TO HOW THIS SERIES OF DEMARCHES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED OR AS TO WHAT MIGHT FURTHER BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT WE MIGHT STILL COUNT ON ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS IN THAILAND YET NOT SPEND SCARCE RESOURCES ON UNPRODUCTIVE OR EVEN COUNTERPRODUCTIVE PROGRAMS. ROBINSON

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